4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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will die. The child is in danger from the illness known as *mdulo* throughout the period from birth until the resumption of intercourse between its parents. It is not until after this ceremony, known as 'taking up the child' [23] that the mystical link between man, wife, and child is broken and the man free to commit adultery without mystical retribution. Thus while there are definite rights and obligations between husband and wife which can be enforced in the courts or are susceptible to the pressure of public opinion there are also in the critical situations of pregnancy and childbirth other mystical forces operating which unite the couple to a greater extent than at any other time. To a lesser extent the same principle operates when a woman menstruates. Her husband is in danger from her menstrual blood. She may not lie on the same mat with him and if he has a bed she must lie on the floor. If he has intercourse with her while she is menstruating he will contract an illness called *lugola* [24] whose symptoms are a very black face, nasal discharge, and continual feeling of cold. After death a man's widows are in danger of *mdulo* if they commit adultery during the first month of mourning.

We see then that the relationship between a man and his wife is partly defined in legal terms, with mutual duties and rights that are enforceable in the courts. This relationship is documentated and validated by the transfer of money and cattle from one group to the other and by the performance of the various marriage ceremonies. Because of the relationship between them, man and wife live together, sleep together, eat together and work together. But above all, together they produce and rear children. It is primarily because of these children that the kin of man and wife are concerned in the marriage relationship. It is during the long process of producing children that the two spouses are most closely associated with each other, and actions of the one in some mystical way directly and automatically influence the well-being of the other.

When a marriage grows out of flirtation between a young man and a young woman, there is at first sexual attraction between them. With the passage of time this may give place to a broader sentiment of mutual affection and respect. To this extent we may say that man and wife come to love each other. But whereas young men frequently discuss with other men the attraction they experience towards women, unmarried or married, they do not do this when they have settled down and begun to acquire prestige in the community. A man may quarrel with his wife in public, but he never expresses his affection for her, save in the intimacies of the hut. Men and women mourn their spouses with great lamentation at funerals, but while this may sometimes be the expression of a personal

[23] *Kutola mwana*. Cf. *kutenga mwana* among the Cewa.

[24] Cf. Read, op. cit., 'The moral code . . .', p. 19, where she describes a medicine called *ugola* with which men doctored their wives so that their lovers would die of a wasting sickness. Also cf. Zulu *ulugola*.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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to the kin of the married couple however much the kin may intervene in the marriage and act on behalf of the couple.

The belief in the occurrence of such diseases as *mdulo* and *lugola* supports the values of Ngoni society, and acts as a check on behaviour which is wrong in Ngoni eyes. Beliefs in the efficacy of medicines do not have such a straightforward moral connotation, for in theory it is as easy for a man to harm the wife of someone else by the use of medicines, or for a woman to harm her co-wife, as it is for a man to harm his cuckold. Medicines can, therefore, be used for good or ill, depending on the intentions of those who manipulate them. Even the possibility of anti-social manipulation of medicines can, however, have a positive effect, as we have seen in the way in which a wife is encouraged to live demurely without attracting the attention of other men, lest when she spurns their advances they retaliate with medicines to harm her in childbirth. Old people like to maintain that in 'the time of peace' the Ngoni did not use medicines at all, although from what we know of the Zulu and other South-Eastern Bantu tribes from which the Ngoni came, this is almost certainly untrue. 'Our spears were our medicines', they say, meaning that when the state was powerful both internally and in relation to their neighbours, law and order and the wishes of the Paramount Chief could be enforced by physical sanctions. Only now, when the chieftainship has lost so much of its former power and men and women can do wrong without fear of punishment in the courts, is it necessary to fall back on mystical processes in an attempt to control other people's behaviour. By contrast the mystical diseases which can only be caught through socially disapproved actions operated at both stages of Ngoni history, although *mdulo* itself, unlike *lugola* and other similar conditions, appears to have been introduced by the Cewa.[8]

To a lesser extent the fear of venereal disease may be said to act as a stabilizing factor, since men admit that they are cautious in running after women on farms, in Fort Jameson and away in the big towns, because they fear syphilis. In the village an infected woman, if she cannot conceal her condition, is shunned by careful men, and a newcomer to the village who starts to flirt with her may be taken aside by an older man and warned of the risk of infection. It is an actionable offence for one partner in a marriage to transmit venereal disease to the other. Venereal disease is, however, commonly believed to be widespread and the fear of it cannot be said to be an efficient deterrent of adultery.

Despite the mystical safeguards and despite the fairly well defined rights *in uxorem*, marriage is not regarded as a permanent bond. There is a maxim 'Never confide in your wife, for tomorrow you may divorce her.' Consanguinity is permanent and unchangeable and a man should confide in a brother rather than in his wife. The

[8] Cf. Read, op. cit. 'The moral code . . .', p. 7.

6:Rattray E,G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

reason they put on this medicine is that they fear the sun lest it strike through the skull. They also take a purgative medicine called *chizuzu*, and pour a decoction in a gourd used for cooking the infant's gruel. The gruel is left off once the child gets strong.

III. Now they prepare to steam the infant. They get the roots of the *Nyalinse* tree and the leaves of the *Chipunganyunyu*, and put them in a pot of water, and get four large white pebbles, and put them in the fire, and when they are red hot, lift them out between two pieces of stick, and drop them into the pot, and the steam envelops the infant. They do this because they fear a disease called *Tsempo* and *Mauka*. This done, the floor of the hut is replastered [with dung], and they set fire to everything that was left in the hut—baskets, potsherds, and spoons. The fire in the hollow in the centre of the floor, they rake up on the floor level, and remove the ashes only, but when they come to fasten the mkuzi belt round the infant's waist, the fire is completely extinguished, and rekindled from that of some other hut. Then the husband comes and stands upright near the doorway, and little cuts are made on his leg. They begin with his big toe, and cut four little slashes, and four on his shin, and four on his knee, both sides, and do the same on the other leg, and on his chest are cut two little gashes, and on his back two. Into these cuts is rubbed some medicine for a disease called *Chinyalo*. When they do this they fear, should the man step over the spot on the verandah where the umbilical cord and afterbirth are buried, he might take this disease of the legs (Chinyalo). If the man have another wife it is she who twists the belt made from the bark of the *Mpoza* tree and places it underneath the mat where she and her husband sleep. Next morning

6:Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

846 she rises early to go and fasten the belt on the infant. Should the man not have a second wife, the one to put the belt on the child is his (the man's) sister. The man does not immediately see the face of his child; some day these same old women make him take it in his arms [hands]. The father then makes them a present of beads.

854 852 301 IV. When they notice the infant is beginning to grow his bottom teeth and to smile at people, the elders tell the father that, "Now you must bring the child into the village." The child's grandmother ties up beforehand some *lizango*. She begins with a little strip of calico, and rolls it round and round the medicine charm and along with a piece of string; then takes a little piece of skin and sews it over this, and takes some beads and sews them on the skin. The mother cooks some relish beforehand. That evening the husband and wife sleep together (this is "to bring the child into the village.") She cuts off the old belt the child is wearing, and puts on the new one with the *lizango* medicine in it, some more of the medicine, similarly tied up, is placed under the infant's head. In the morning she takes the relish to present to the two old women, and then takes the *lizango* she had placed under the child's head and ties it round his neck, and then takes a belt of beads, interspersed [789] with little wooden charms, and adorns the child. When in time the *lizango* belt breaks, they do not look for it or replace it. In the event of an infant dying before he has been "brought into the village," 766 they bury it in some open glade, near the edge of some stream, its funeral is attended by women only. Should a man tramp over the spot where the child [753] is buried, he "has taken" the disease known as *nyesi*. Such a grave is known as *nsenye*.

6:Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

X

THE LOTS

753 791 I. If a man be ill, his companion goes off and seeks the oracle man. He comes outside his hut and hails him, "Zikomo." The owner says, "Yes, come in here." And the man enters the hut, and says, "We have come to you that you may trace a spirit for us." Then the man takes out his lots from a little cat's-skin bag, and takes some ashes and rubs the lots with them, and begins to consult them, and says, "Are you nursing some sick person?" And he replies, "Yes, indeed, I have been attending on a sick person; the little thing that is ill is a child, and I cannot get sleep for him (lit. with him), and he will not even eat gruel, and I said, 'But I must go to the oracle man; perhaps there he may follow up for me the spirit which is causing the child to be ill.'" Then he begins to consult the lots, and says, "It is the spirit of the child's grandmother; it is she who is causing the child to be ill." And he who has come to consult the lots replies, "I have heard." And the lots again speak (through the man): "Why do you not keep me in mind, and even my grandchild, you also go without calling me to mind," but if you give the spirit a fowl take it from me, the child is sitting up; when you go and take the fowl, kneel down with it, and say, "Grandmother, there is the fowl on account of which you are taking a life" (*muntu*). Then the man who has come from the road (to consult the lots) says, "Put the spirit of mine back in the bag."

787 955 II. Then he goes home, and takes his fowl, and kneels down with it, and takes a gourd-cup of water,

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XXVI

THE KANONOMERA DANCE

If a person is ill, they go and consult the lots, and then he of the lots says, "It is the spirit of his grandmother, it is wanting a dance; when you dance that dance, you can take it from us the child is sitting up." And they go to the village and take a basket of grain, and with it they address the spirit, saying, "There is the grain for which you are killing a person; when we have made beer, let us see the person (who is ill) sitting up." And then they assemble every one, and the day the beer is strained, they all come together, and that evening they enter the hut (where the sick person is), and begin to clap their hands to rouse the spirit, and then they see the sick one is trembling and crying out, and then the people say (to the spirit), "You must not come with war, it is we who have called you; see here at the village the drums have come, but let them depart again without anything happening to mar the dance." And when they have finished clapping their hands the dance comes forth, and the drums begin to sound, and they are dancing. He who remembers a song sings it; when one is possessed by a spirit, down he falls, and they drag him out of the dance, and deck him with calico and skins of animals, and he again enters the circle and dances. When a person is possessed by a child's spirit, they bind his calico tightly round him that it be strong, because that person is wishing to strip it off, and dance naked, as a child does not wear anything. Should a woman be seized by a man's spirit, saying, "I am so and so," they deck her with a

13:Fraser M-5 (ca. 1890) 1901
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their anger and propitiate them. Yet this recognition is not made in any degree of affection but in the times of dark necessity. When the rain has not fallen, when locusts swarm and eat up their crops, when sickness and death are abroad in the village, the spirits are working out their vengeance for being neglected. Then they are remembered and sacrifice is made. There are also certain ceremonial observances on important occasions. Before the gardens are hoed, and when the reaping time draws near; if an army is going out to battle, or when a coronation takes place, then prayer is made. The confusion of the old and new ideas was amusingly illustrated at the last coronation ceremony, when Mperembe, the eldest sub-chief, sacrificed a bull, and offering it to the spirit of the dead chief prayed him to bless the new chief, then added, "and, O Mombera, bless the teachers when they go about teaching the people the words of God." There was something very beautiful in this recognition of Christianity as but a fuller shining of the dim light they had.

Their old men are full of stories and traditions, some of them are uncommonly like the stories of Uncle Remus, and others with a curious echo of Old Testament story. There is a hill near Ekwendeni, where tradition says a great tower was built by the Tumbuka to reach into the moon. But the white ants ate away the foundation and the tower fell and the people were killed. I passed below this hill when I was on my way home, and chaffed my carriers on trying to build so great a tower with wood. They laughed, and said, "But do you know the story of the hill over there?" pointing to the north. No, I said, what is it? And they told me how that long ago the Tumbuka found the country too narrow, so they decided to climb into heaven and cultivate new gardens there. So they gathered the nation together and cut down all the trees, and began to build a huge tower on this hill. When they had got a great way up, some cried "Stop, we need build no more. Here is a ladder coming down out of heaven." And they looked up and saw great roots hanging down. So the people caught hold of these roots and began climbing hand over hand up to heaven. But suddenly while they were all climbing, the roots broke, and the nation fell to the earth and was snuffed out.

Like other children of nature there are men and women in the tribe who seem to have a wonderful gift of second sight. Forty years ago a regiment went out on a great raid. The witch doctor in blessing them told them that they would meet a white man